



7- Primary Research- Surveys



Surveys 1

Student Pages

Surveys, sometimes called *questionnaires*, are a series of either open or closed questions (sometimes both) that are used to gather data from people. They will almost always have demographic questions included. The demographic information asked for will answer questions to help in the analysis of the other information gathered from the survey. The demographic information often includes access questions as well (such as where you completed the survey, for instance) for validity checks and scope assessment.

For example, if you were trying to find out how many teenagers use email, you would need to have a demographic question about ages and a question about how and where the participants in the survey filled out their answers. These questions would allow you to check that the people who had filled out the survey were teenagers and allow people who read your research to check that your finding that "100% of teenagers use email" was not reached because the survey was emailed to participants!

The decision to use either open or closed (or a combination of the two) types of questions is usually decided by the type of information you need and the data and resulting presentation.

In a general way it may help to think of closed questions - those that require a short answer - as providing quantitative data. Closed questions in a survey will be much quicker to answer and require much less analysis: therefore many more questionnaires or surveys are usually done to widen the scope of the research.

On the other hand, open questions - those that require a more complex answer - are more qualitative. They will take much more time to answer and record but supply much more in-depth information.

Often you will find that a survey includes a section of short answer closed questions that require the participant to tick a box, and then a smaller section asking for more in-depth information and answers where the participant is asked their opinion or views with open questions. This way the researcher has some quick answers to turn into numerical data and some more in-depth information with which to assess more individualised opinions and preferences.

DISCUSSION:

Surveys are a favoured format among market researchers; that is to say the people who are finding out what you the consumer want to spend your money on, and why you want one product over another. Discuss why you think that people in the field of advertising and marketing might find surveys helpful, and compare your answers with why you think that health care workers find surveys helpful in assessing a person's health.

Discussion:

Where do you most often see surveys? What are they asking you about and what purpose do you think the information is put to by the researcher and their employers?



Surveys 2



The questions asked in surveys need to be carefully checked for ambiguities (confused meanings or double meanings) so that the participants answer the questions you need answered and not something else! Have a look at the questions below and then the information the survey author is trying to get. If the question will supply the information, leave it; if it will not, try to fix the question.

Example:

Question: When did you last buy cat food?

Information wanted: How often people buy cat food.

Fixed by: Asking when their household last brought cat food.

1. **Question:** Do you know anyone with heart disease?

Information wanted: Does this person's family have a history of heart disease?

Fixed by: _____

2. **Question:** How much mail is received by you each day?

Information wanted: Approximate levels of email traffic in each students' inboxes.

Fixed by: _____

3. **Question:** How many people do you email on a daily basis?

Information wanted: How many contacts does the average person store on their email account?

Fixed by: _____

4. **Question:** How long does your family keep receipts from their shopping?

Information wanted: Do people actually read their receipts?

Fixed by: _____

5. **Question:** Do you have an apple in your lunch box?

Information wanted: How many students have fruit for lunch?

Fixed by: _____

As you can see, how you ask your questions can affect the validity of the information you gather. Try writing a question about a topic of your own choice and writing it another way so that it asks for the same information.

Topic: _____

Question 1: _____

Rewritten as: _____

Ask a friend to read your 2 questions and let you know if they think you will get the same information from both questions.